

## Putting the Heart before the Horse.

Recently, we've received an immeasurable blessing in the reading of the book "Real Christianity". This book was authored by William Wilberforce. Some of you may have heard this name and know of him as the leading force for the abolition of slavery in England back in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries – predating the Pastor by about 50 years.

"The brother or sister in the Truth might find the faith of the "nominal" Christian somehow offensive or inauthentic. But were we to take the time to get to know the so-called "nominal" believer, it may surprise us to discover a purity of heart that puts our own to shame. In many cases, what we will find in them is a clear indication of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts and lives, along with a love of Christ, ardent and active zeal in His service, prudence, meekness, and a quiet consistency. Such behavior needs no argument to defend."

Brethren, our implacable, relentless, merciless, tireless adversary – Satan, the Devil, Lucifer – seeks to devour us. He has countless arrows in his quiver to accomplish his singular task when it comes to us – the Spirit-begotten. With all violence he can muster, he seeks to extinguish the light of the world. And sometimes, without even knowing it, we may find ourselves helping him – specifically as it relates to divisions and evil speaking. Such things are often justified under the guise of "upholding the banner of Truth" or "in defense of the Truth."

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### **DOCTRINES MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT**

THERE are certain features of the doctrine of Christ which are fundamental and indispensable, and without which none would be recognized of the Lord as one of His followers. There are other features which would seem to be useful, helpful, blessed, but not fundamental--not essential to membership in the Body of Christ. The fundamentals have been enjoyed by good, saintly ones from the Day of Pentecost until now.

We, the same class now, have the same fundamentals, and are permitted to have other privileges, truths, "meat in due season," for our strengthening. These latter are not necessarily essential to our membership in the Body of Christ; otherwise our forefathers who did not have them would not have been members of Christ,

and there would have been no Christ Body for centuries.

The fundamental theory of the Atonement is as follows:

(1) All men--all of Adam's children--are sinners.

(2) None can be reconciled to God without a Redeemer's sacrifice.

(3) Jesus came into the world to be that Sacrifice-- and later to apply that Ransom-price for the sins of the world.

(4) On the basis of faith in the Redeemer's work, the believer may consecrate himself to the Divine service, in acceptance of the Divine invitation, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice."

(5) So doing, the believer may--up to the time of the completion of the Elect number--exercise full assurance of faith that his sacrifice will be accepted of the Father; and that he will receive a share of the anointing of the Holy Spirit--the begetting.

(6) Such as meet these conditions are to be accepted as brethren in the highest sense of the term. This much would seem to have been always necessary, and more than this we believe is not necessary today. But if by reason of our favorable day we have more knowledge, we may also have corresponding trials, which our greater knowledge will offset.

Our advice to the Lord's dear people everywhere is that they put no yoke upon each other, beyond the fundamentals specified above--that otherwise they stand free, and leave each other free, and fellowship and agree as much as they can with each other.

If there be a disposition to crowd each other on more than this basic faith, and if it be considered necessary to separate in order to the progress of either of the parties, then doubtless rather than a continual contention a separation would be the wise course.

[...]

If after fully considering these matters, a class finds that it cannot agree, and would make better progress as two classes, we would concur in that conclusion as a wise one, as much as we would deplore the necessity of a division. Such a separation would not necessarily alienate either class from the Lord's people, nor from the Society, because both acknowledge Jesus as their Redeemer, and both acknowledge that His blood is primarily efficacious.

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You may be thinking “Just where are you going with this?”

Brethren, we’re at a crossroads. We’ve been deceived into thinking that things like the Chronology, or the Pastor, or the Kingdom are what make us different – even better than the dreaded “nominals.”

That’s a lie, based solely on the flames of pride, stoked by the father of lies. It’s a LIE that gives us a false sense of security. It’s a lie that has plagued our dear friends in the Jehovah’s Witnesses for the better part of a century. It is NOT the abundance of what we like to call “meat in due season” that makes us different.

Not. Even. Close.

So, what DOES make us different – or probably put more accurately, what SHOULD be making us different?

There’s only ONE place to turn – GOD’s Holy Word.

**Psa 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

**Luk 18:10-14 KJV**

**10** Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

**11** The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

**12** I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

**13** And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

**14** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

BE THE PUBLICAN!!! NOT the pharisee...

How? How do we purge the Pharisee out of us? Thankfully, we don't need to look far, and we don't have to know much!

It has been pointed out many times before that what we commonly call "The Beatitudes" could also be called "the attitudes we should be" or the "Be Attitudes".

These are ALL matters of the heart, NOT of the HEAD! Halleluia for that!

**Mat 5:1** And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Note carefully, to whom Jesus is speaking. It is NOT the "multitudes," but rather his closest disciples. In fact, he fled the multitudes and the disciples had to make an effort to follow him up into the mountain.

### **The Beatitudes**

Mat 5:2-3

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

The Greek word used at the start of each Be Attitude is meant to convey the thought of EXTREME blessing. This isn't just a simple thought of being or feeling blessed. This is in the highest sense – namely, in the fullest and final sense, that blessing will be the reward of being part of the Bride, the Divine Nature.

The Greek word for "poor" is also in the EXTREME. It means utterly destitute. Beggarly, a pauper – this signifies ULTIMATE humility!

Mat 5:4 **Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**

The Greek word for "mourn" here indicates a sense of INTENSE mourning, not casual sorrow or occasional sadness. This is a deep, abiding condition of broken-hearted contrition for our OWN sinful, ruinous condition. As we go along, you will begin to notice a pattern forming, that each of these Be Attitudes aren't individual or independent things, but rather that they are cumulative, and that EVERY one of them will be found in EVERY member of the little flock.

**Mat 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**

Don't make the mistake of confusing meekness with timidity. Plenty of meek people are also VERY strong personalities. Moses, "the meekest man in all the earth" and Jesus "meek and lowly" were anything but timid. A meek person is NOT someone who is passive or easily pushed around. Meekness goes back to being "poor in spirit." It is to be wholly submissive, without reservation, to the Divine Will. Meekness is a governor of thoughts and emotions – gentleness, self-control, not being easily provoked or irritated, forbearing under injury or annoyance – all the while applying those lessons to his or her own character development.

**Mat 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**

One commentary remarks: THIS hunger is for COMPLETE righteousness, not just enough to soothe a guilty conscience.

The Greek word for "hunger" here isn't what we normally think of as hunger. It's an insatiable, unquenchable, unfillable hunger that can never get enough. Isn't it such a remarkable coincidence that we don't eat things that we don't like? If we like the taste of sin, or of ease, or of money, or of iniquity – guess what we're going to eat?

I used to think and say foolish things like: It's easy to love righteousness, but it's the hatred of iniquity that I struggle with.

Yeah... I'm not too smart. That's the adversary planting those horrible thoughts in my head, as a way to make me feel better about myself.

The DEEP truths are also often the most painful to face-up to. I'm obviously not talking about prophecy or chronology, but rather the truths about ourselves and how they convict us in the deepest recesses of our hearts.

In short, you CANNOT "love righteousness" and NOT "hate iniquity! It's impossible. Our hatred of iniquity is DIRECTLY proportional to our LOVE for righteousness.

**Mat 5:7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**

Yet another “proportional” verse. In simplest terms, “you get what you give.” This isn’t a forced mercy, or a ritualistic mercy. We aren’t merciful because we expect something in return, but it becomes another polished gem in this array of jewels we should strive to hang around our necks.

It’s almost mathematical in its simplicity and precision, and it also gives us another glimpse into the wonderful character of our GOD – our Abba Father. He literally gives us the power and the keys to the kingdom, the secret recipe or formula for success – the more mercy we show, the more mercy we ARE shown. The more we forgive those who trespass against US, the more forgiveness we receive when inevitably we trespass against GOD. Also, you can’t be TRULY merciful or forgiving without having humility, meekness, and being poor in spirit – all of which adds up to the greatest four-letter word in the English language:

L-O-V-E

Being poor in spirit, having a mourning, contrite disposition, being meek, hungering after righteousness, and being merciful put us on a collision course with the next Be Attitude...

**Mat 5:8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.**

Have you ever thought about the moment you first SEE GOD?! With your own eyes, not metaphorically or symbolically, but REALLY see Him as He is? I certainly hope so! Is there anything you desire more?

Jesus hands us – His disciples – the Secret Recipe for the Perfect Character Souffle. The cumulative effect of preceding Be Attitudes has the natural effect of purifying our hearts. It can’t HELP but have that result! Imagine what it would be like to have a truly PURE heart! It’s almost impossible to conceive. Again, this is to the CHURCH, who WILL see GOD with their own eyes!

Love one another with a PURE heart FERVENTLY!

**Mat 5:9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

This verse isn't talking about living IN peace, be rather those who continuously act to overcome evil, strife, etc to BRING ABOUT peace. This can be in our own home, in our ecclesia, at our place of work, etc. By doing this, we also bring about peace with GOD. A peacemaker is never a source of contention, strife, evil speaking and does not participate or encourage such things – saving for when genuine principle, NOT manufactured principle, is at stake. A peacemaker is always ready and willing to sacrifice personal preferences, liberties, and even “rights” upon the altar of love to bring about peace, without murmuring. By doing this, we have the assurance that we are truly “children of GOD.”

**Mat 5:10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

1 Tim 3:12 -- ALL who live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution. If we find ourselves approved of the world and living in perfect harmony in our daily lives with men and brethren, we could be in more trouble than we know. If we don't stand out as being peculiar or odd in some manner to those around us – possibly even amongst our own brethren – this may well indicate that we're in a sorry state indeed. Quoting the Pastor: “Not only in severe persecutions, but also in the lesser ones, when our names are cast out as evil “when men shall separate you from their company.”

The world will love its own. If the world loves us, then we are not of God.

**Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.**

IF the Gospel – the Good News – is our ALL-ABSORBING theme in life, it WILL bring rejection and persecution. The god of this world hates the Gospel. It is at odds with everything he and this world stand for. There should be no ambiguity with those around us as to where we stand. Darkness HATES the light.

Let us ALL be children of light!

**Mat 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**

Great is YOUR reward in HEAVEN! There can be no question or debate about who these “Be Attitudes” are directed. As we stated at the beginning, ALL of these are

requirements for character development and ALL of them WILL be found in abundance in Every. Single. One. of the Little Flock.

### **Salt and Light**

Mat 5:13-16

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.